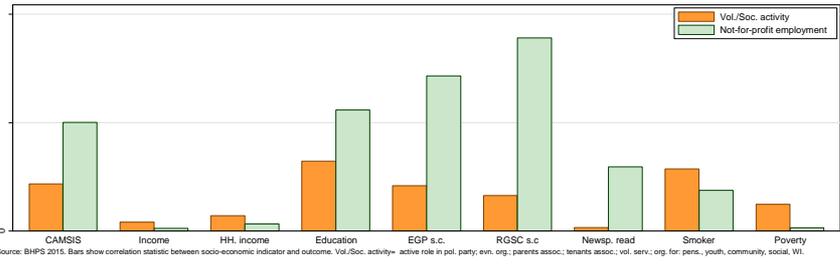


Café conversation session: Socio-economic measures

Measures and variables relevant to studying civil society

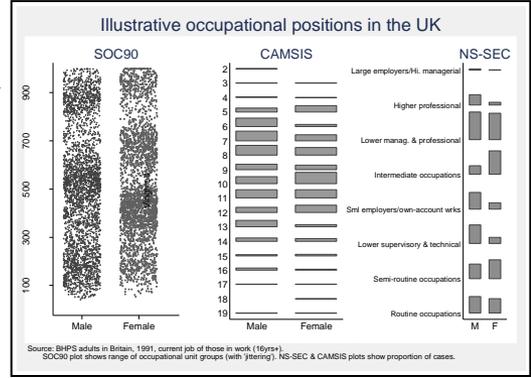
Paul Lambert, University of Stirling

Comment: 'Functional forms' & socio-economic measures.
 Whether a measure is 'categorical' or 'metric' influences the sort of analysis that is done. Most socio-economic inequalities have an underlying gradational form. In practice, they are often measured with categories. Sometimes, it's reasonable to assign a scale score to categories, making analysis much easier.



Example: Occupation-based measures can use both categorical and metric functional forms

Example: Highest educational qualification is a particularly ambiguous measure of socio-economic situation because of its strong relation to birth cohort and gender



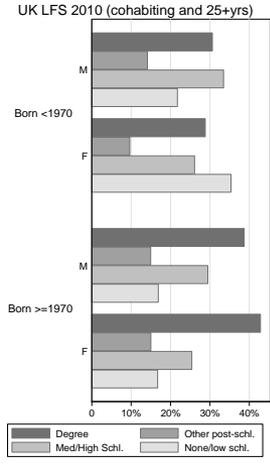
Social scientific challenge: Many studies are inconsistent in how they measure or understand socio-economic circumstances. There is advice from NSI's (National Statistical Institutions), and academic methodologists, on the best way to measure important socio-economic concepts (e.g. 'social class', poverty, social status), yet:

- Researchers are often unaware of relevant recommendations
 - Researchers sometimes choose not to - or lack the data to - implement best practice
 - ... and recommenders disagree with each other and give inconsistent advice
- TSO challenge:** Should understand socio-economics of TSO members, & participants/users, but:
- For many TSO's these also interact substantially with life-course stage

Metadata comment:
 Operationalising many alternative socio-economic measures makes sense – but linking the data and metadata is not easy!

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** (1) Implementation of NS-SEC: 'indicator' variable
** (2) Implementation of NS-SEC: 'category' variable
** (3) Implementation of NS-SEC: 'score' variable
** (4) Implementation of NS-SEC: 'label' variable
** (5) Implementation of NS-SEC: 'description' variable
** (6) Implementation of NS-SEC: 'parent' variable
** (7) Implementation of NS-SEC: 'child' variable
** (8) Implementation of NS-SEC: 'sibling' variable
** (9) Implementation of NS-SEC: 'grandparent' variable
** (10) Implementation of NS-SEC: 'grandchild' variable
** (11) Implementation of NS-SEC: 'sibling-in-law' variable
** (12) Implementation of NS-SEC: 'parent-in-law' variable
** (13) Implementation of NS-SEC: 'child-in-law' variable
** (14) Implementation of NS-SEC: 'sibling-in-law-in-law' variable
** (15) Implementation of NS-SEC: 'parent-in-law-in-law' variable
** (16) Implementation of NS-SEC: 'child-in-law-in-law' variable
** (17) Implementation of NS-SEC: 'sibling-in-law-in-law-in-law' variable
** (18) Implementation of NS-SEC: 'parent-in-law-in-law-in-law' variable
** (19) Implementation of NS-SEC: 'child-in-law-in-law-in-law' variable
** (20) Implementation of NS-SEC: 'sibling-in-law-in-law-in-law-in-law' variable
    
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Some practical FAQ's

- Q: What's the best way to measure social class? A: Methodologists favour standardised occupation-based measures such as the NS-SEC class scheme based on SOC2010.
- Q: That sounds hard; can't I use something else? A: All sorts of things are sometimes used to measure class, e.g. education, tenure, asset ownership, area profile. It is best if you can justify, and clearly document, whatever non-standard measure you choose.
- Q: What's the best measure if my target group is mostly old or young? A: For older: occupation, tenure, assets. For younger: Education, occupation, consumption. For nobody: Area profile.
- Q: It still sounds hard to use occupations? A: It's a little easier than it seems: Use a standard tool to code to an occupation unit group (e.g. 5), then a standard translation code to go from occupations to the measure (e.g.6).
- Q: What should be done for people who don't have occupations? A: Methodologists suggest the best approach is: (i) allocate by the occupation of the 'dominant' economic position in the household; (ii) use the most recent job if there isn't a current job; (iii) use the occupation of a significant alter, such as spouse or parent
- Q: Aren't there more important socio-economic measures than occupation-based ones? A: Probably not ;) But there are lots of other interesting socio-economic concepts and measures. There are recommendations and methodological literatures on things such as the best way to measure and analyse income, wealth, housing situation, consumption, poverty, human capital, social capital and regional economic profile (e.g. 1, 2, 3).

Huge survey reveals seven social classes in UK
[\[http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-22007058\]](http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-22007058)

Class calculator | US view | Reader reactions | 'Huge survey' | The

People in the UK now fit into seven social classes, a major survey conducted by the BBC suggests.

It says the traditional categories of working, middle and upper class are outdated, fitting 39% of people.

It found a new model of seven social classes ranging from the elite at the top to a "precarious" - the poor, precarious proletariat - at the bottom.

More than 161,000 people took part in the Great British Class Survey, the largest study of class in the UK.

Class has traditionally been defined by occupation, wealth and education. But this new model suggests that this is too simple.

Previous definitions of social class are considered to be outdated.

8 handy sources for advice and guidance on socio-economic measures in the UK

- (1) Bulmer, M., Gibbs, J., & Hyman, L. (Eds.). (2010). *Social Measurement through Social Surveys: An Applied Approach*. Aldershot: Ashgate.
- (2) Shaw, M., Galabardes, B., Lawlor, D. A., Lynch, J., Wheeler, B., & Davey Smith, G. (2007). *The Handbook of Inequality and Socioeconomic Position: Concepts and Measures*. Bristol: Policy Press.
- (3) ONS. (2012). Office for National Statistics, Guidance and Methodology: Harmonisation Programme. Retrieved 1 May, 2012, from <http://www.ons.gov.uk/ons/guide-method/harmonisation/harmonisation-programme/>
- (4) <http://www.ons.gov.uk/ons/guide-method/classifications/current-standard-classifications/soc2010/classifications-coding-tools/index.html>
- (5) <http://www2.warwick.ac.uk/fac/soc/ier/software/cascot>
- (6) <http://www.camsis.stir.ac.uk/ocunits/distribution.html>
- (7) Hoffmeyer-Zlotnick, J. H. P., & Warner, U. (2014). *Harmonising Demographic and Socio-Economic Variables for Cross-National Comparative Survey Research*. Berlin: Springer.
- (8) <https://www.ukdataservice.ac.uk/use-data/guides/>